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## Equal education, unequal pay: Why is there still a gender pay gap in 2024?

By **CLAIRE SAVAGE**  
Associated Press

**CHICAGO (AP)** — Not even education can close the pay gap that persists between women and men, according to a recent U.S. Census Bureau report.

Whether women earn a post-secondary certificate or graduate from a top-tier university, they still make about 71 cents on the dollar compared with men at the same education level, Census Bureau research found. That difference is coming into stark view on Equal Pay Day, and in spite of the fact that women comprise more than half of college-educated workers and participate in the labor force at record rates.

Rather than comparing full-time working men to full-time working women, the Feb. 22 Census Bureau report juxtaposes men and women with the same education caliber:



Chantel Adams, a senior marketing executive, sits in her home office Thursday, March 7, 2024, in Durham, N.C.

Associated Press  
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## Equal education, unequal pay: Why is there still a gender pay gap in 2024?

Continued from Front

graduates of certificate degree programs and those who hold bachelor's degrees from the most selective universities, explained economist Kendall Houghton, a co-author of the research. The report also includes graduates who may have opted out of the labor force, such as women taking on child care responsibilities. "The main point here is that there's a substantial gap at every single level," added Census Bureau economist and co-author Ariel Binder. Field of study, choice of occupation and hours account for much of the discrepancy, but not all. Field of study, for instance, contributes to the pay gap much more for top gradu-

ates (24.6%), but for less selective degree holders accounted for only a sliver (3.8%). And the number of hours and weeks worked affect the pay gap more for certificate earners (26.4%) than selective bachelor's degree earners (11.3%), suggesting there is a bigger gender difference in work participation for certificate holders, Binder said. At the same time, about 31% of the gap for each education level remains unexplained, suggesting less easily measured factors such as gender stereotypes and discrimination may be at play. Chantel Adams says she isn't surprised that the gender pay gap persists even among men and women with the same level and quality of education, or

that the gap is wider for Black and Hispanic women. A senior marketing executive who holds an MBA from University of North Carolina's Kenan-Flagler Business School, Adams said her qualifications aren't enough to counteract the headwinds she faces in her career as a Black woman. Despite taking on extra responsibilities and an undisputedly strong performance, Adams said she was turned down for a promotion because she was told that "I was so articulate and sharp that it was intimidating to some people." "I have nearly \$300,000 of post-high school education. It would be surprising if I weren't articulate and sharp," said Adams, who is based in Durham, North



**Chantel Adams, a senior marketing executive, poses in her home office Thursday, March 7, 2024, in Durham, N.C.**  
Associated Press

Carolina. She said her peers at the company — one of whom did not have an MBA — were promoted while she was held back two years in a row. "It's unreasonable and unfair to hold someone's strengths against them," Adams said. "I would consider that as something that is race-based." Broadly, younger women are closer to wage parity with younger men, according to Carolina Aragao, who researches social and demographic trends at Pew Research Center. But the gap widens between the ages of 35 and 44, which coincides with when women are most likely to have a child at home. "That does not play out the same way for men," Aragao said, adding that there is actually an opposite phenomenon known as the fatherhood premium, in which fathers tend to earn more than other workers, including men without children at home. Despite women making vast gains in C-suite and high-earning industry representation, wage gap improvement has stalled for about 20 years, Aragao said. Uneven child care and household responsibilities, falling college wage

premiums, and overrepresentation in lower-paying occupations are all contributors to why the pay gap stubbornly remains. For Adams, the best strategy to overcome them has been to keep changing jobs — six times in 10 years, across multiple states in her case. "I knew that I needed to be intentional and move with urgency as I navigated my career in order to work against that headwind," she said. "When those opportunities were not afforded me within one company, I've gone elsewhere." Adams said job coaching, mentorship, and support from Forte Foundation, a nonprofit focused on women's advancement, have been instrumental to her success, while salary transparency laws — and even salary transparency within social circles — could help alleviate the significant pay gap challenges women of color face. But corporate diversity initiatives have been subject to a growing list of lawsuits ever since the Supreme Court struck down affirmative action in college admissions. Adams said she worries that without affirmative action, corporate racial diversity could decrease, too. □



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# U.S. lawmakers say TikTok won't be banned if it finds a new owner

By **MATT O'BRIEN**  
AP Technology Writer

U.S. lawmakers are threatening to ban TikTok but also say they are giving its Chinese parent company a chance to keep it running.

The premise of a bipartisan bill headed for a vote in the U.S. House of Representatives is that TikTok fans in the U.S. can keep scrolling through their favorite social media app so long as Beijing-based ByteDance gives up on owning it.

"It doesn't have to be this painful for ByteDance," U.S. Rep. Raja Krishnamoorthi, an Illinois Democrat and bill co-sponsor, recently posted on X. "They could make it a lot easier on themselves by simply divesting @tiktok us. It's their choice." But it's not going to be as simple as lawmakers are making it sound, according to experts.

#### WHO WOULD BUY TIKTOK?

While some people have voiced an interest in buying TikTok's U.S. business among them "Shark Tank" star Kevin O'Leary there are a number of challenges including a 6-month deadline to get it done.

"Somebody would have to actually be ready to shell out the large amount of money that this product and system is worth," said Stanford University researcher Graham Webster, who studies Chinese technology policy and U.S.-China relations. "But even if somebody has deep enough pockets and is ready to go into negotiating to purchase, this sort of matchmaking on acquisitions is not quick."

Big tech companies could afford it but would likely face intense scrutiny from antitrust regulators in both the U.S. and China. Then again, if the bill actually becomes law and survives First Amendment court challenges, it could make TikTok cheaper to buy.

"One of the main effects of the legislation would be to decrease the sale price," said Matt Perault, director of the University of North Carolina's Center on Technology Policy, which gets



A TikTok sign is displayed on their building in Culver City, Calif., Monday, March 11, 2024.

Associated Press

funding from TikTok and other tech companies. "As you approach that 180-day clock, the pressure on the company to sell or risk being banned entirely would be high, which would mean probably the acquirers could get it at a lower price."

#### HOW WOULD IT WORK?

The bill calls for prohibiting TikTok in the U.S. but makes an exception if there's a "qualified divestiture."

That could only happen if the U.S. president determines "through an interagency process" that TikTok is "no longer being controlled by a foreign adversary," according to the bill. Not only that, but the new U.S.-based TikTok would have to completely cut ties with ByteDance. That includes no more "cooperation with respect to the operation of a content recommendation algorithm or an agreement with respect to data sharing."

It reflects longstanding concerns that Chinese authorities could force ByteDance to hand over data on the 170 million Americans who use TikTok. The worry stems from a set of Chinese national security laws that compel organizations to assist with intelligence gathering.

It's an unusual bill in the way that it targets a single company. Typically, a government group led by the Treasury secretary called the Committee on Foreign

Investment in the United States, or CFIUS, will review whether such a sale would

pose any national security threats.

**HASN'T THIS HAPPENED BE-**

#### FORE?

Yes. The Trump administration brokered a deal in 2020 that would have had U.S. corporations Oracle and Walmart take a large stake in TikTok on national security grounds.

The deal would have also made Oracle responsible for hosting all TikTok's U.S. user data and securing computer systems to ensure national security requirements are satisfied. Microsoft also made a failed bid for TikTok that its CEO Satya Nadella later described as the "strangest thing I've ever worked on." Instead of congressional action, the 2020 arrangement was in response to then-President Donald Trump's series of executive actions targeting TikTok. □

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# Scott Peterson appears virtually in California court as LA Innocence Project takes up murder case

**REDWOOD CITY, Calif.**

**(AP)** — Scott Peterson appeared virtually in court on Tuesday, nearly 20 years after he was convicted of killing his pregnant wife, as his lawyers asked a judge to order new DNA tests and allow their investigators to access evidence connected with a burglary across the street from the couple's California home.

Peterson was sentenced to death after a jury found him guilty of murder in the deaths of Laci and the unborn child they planned to name Conner. Prosecutors said he killed Laci and dumped her body in the San Francisco Bay on Christmas Eve 2002. The death sentence was later overturned, and he was sentenced to life without the possibility of parole.

The Los Angeles Innocence Project has now taken up Peterson's case. The group suggests in court documents that Laci Peterson may have witnessed a Christmas Eve break-in across the street from the couple's home in Modesto and been kidnapped and then killed by the burglars. The filings represent a long-



**Scott Peterson appears via video call for a status hearing at San Mateo County Superior Court in Redwood City, Calif., Tuesday, March 12, 2024.**

**Associated Press**

shot bid to exonerate the 51-year-old Peterson, two decades after his arrest captivated the nation. In January, the LA Innocence Project filed motions on his behalf "to order further discovery of evidence and allow new DNA testing to support our investigation into Mr. Peterson's claim of actual innocence," the group's director, Paula

Mitchell, said in a statement Tuesday. The project is seeking DNA tests on materials connected to the burglary, and on tarps and a large plastic bag found at the waterfront near where the bodies washed up separately. In addition, the group's attorneys are asking for police reports and audio and video recordings from inter-

views of suspects and witnesses connected to the burglary. The court filings claim the Modesto Police Department improperly withheld materials and was too hasty in declaring that the burglars had no connection to the killings. Stanislaus County prosecutor David Harris told Judge Elizabeth Hill it will take time to go through old materials,

much of which he believes was already litigated at trial and again during Peterson's appeal.

"There's a lot of back and forth from the record and there is going to be a large amount of reading from both sides," Harris said.

One of the burglary suspects, named in court filings as D.M., denied that he had anything to do with the break-in but suggested to police that maybe the burglars were confronted by Laci Peterson and they "did something stupid."

"D.M. further claimed to have knowledge that someone other than Mr. Peterson killed Laci Peterson because he stated that he knows Mr. Peterson is innocent," the filings say.

In court, Mitchell said her group's requests are "not a fishing expedition. They're very precise. They're very specific." In the original trial, prosecutors presented mostly circumstantial evidence while arguing that Peterson was having an affair with a Fresno massage therapist when he killed Laci, took her body out in a fishing boat and dumped her in the bay. □

# Wild horses facing removal in a North Dakota national park just got another strong ally: Congress

**By JACK DURA**  
**Associated Press**

**BISMARCK, N.D. (AP)** — Ad-

vocates for some 200 wild horses roaming North Dakota's Theodore Roosevelt

National Park are hoping a signal of support from Congress will prevent the removal of the beloved animals from the rugged landscape.

A National Park Service decision is expected around April as to the horses' future in the park's colorful, rolling Badlands. It's part of an ongoing process to craft a park management plan for "livestock" a term horse advocates reject.

Republican Sen. John Hoeven's legislation, tucked in the annual Interior and Environment budget bill that Congress passed and President Joe Biden signed, strongly recommends that the Park Service keep the horses in place. It also sig-

nals a potential future action that would deny any funding intended to remove them.

"Now we'll continue to have a dialogue with them and hopefully get to a good solution," Hoeven said in an interview with The Associated Press.

A remaining question is how many horses would ensure the long-term preservation of the herd. Advocates want to see a genetically viable herd of at least 150 horses to avoid inbreeding issues. Park Superintendent Angie Richman has said the horses, if they ultimately stay, would still have to be reduced to 35 to 60 animals under a 1978 environmental assessment.

Richman and the National Park Service did not respond to emails for comment on Hoeven's legislation.

Previously, park officials have said their evaluation of whether the horses should stay is in line with their policies to remove non-native species when they pose a potential risk to resources. The park has proposed removing the horses quickly or gradually or taking no action.

Advocates have feared a predetermined ouster of the horses, whose predecessors were accidentally fenced into the park in the 1950s and were subject to subsequent roundups. □



**Wild horses stand in a group along a hiking trail in Theodore Roosevelt National Park, Oct. 21, 2023, near Medora, N.D.**

**Associated Press**

## UN envoy: Finding that some hostages were victims of sexual violence doesn't justify Israeli attacks

By EDITH M. LEDERER  
Associated Press

UNITED NATIONS (AP) —

The U.N. envoy focusing on sexual violence in conflict warned Israel on Monday that the finding of "clear and convincing information" that some hostages taken by Hamas during its Oct. 7 attack in southern Israel were subjected to sexual violence "does not in any way legitimize further hostilities."

"In fact, it creates a moral imperative for a humanitarian cease-fire to end the unspeakable suffering imposed on Palestinian civilians in Gaza and bring about the immediate and unconditional release of all hostages," Pramila Patten told the U.N. Security Council where Israel's foreign minister was also sitting and listening.

"Continuation of hostilities can, in no way, protect them," she said. "It can only expose them to further risk of violence, including sexual violence."

Patten was speaking at a council meeting sought by Israel and called by the United States, United Kingdom and France to focus on her recent report, which also found "reason-



Pramila Patten, right, United Nations Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict, addresses a meeting of the United Nations Security Council on the war in Gaza, Monday, March 11, 2024, at U.N. headquarters.

able grounds" to believe Hamas committed rape, sexualized torture, and other cruel and inhumane acts against women during the Oct. 7 attack that killed about 1,200 people and led to 250 others being taken hostage.

She told the council that the 134 hostages still in captivity and the more than 2 million civilians in Gaza "share a common fate. For their

common sake, there must be a humanitarian cease-fire now." Israel's ongoing offensive against Hamas has killed over 30,000 people, two-thirds of them women and children, according to the Gaza Health Ministry.

Israel's Foreign Minister Israel Katz said he came to the council "to protest as loud as I can against the crimes against humanity" commit-

ted by Hamas in order to deter and scare Israeli society.

He strongly criticized the Security Council's failure in over 40 meetings since Oct. 7 to condemn Hamas' actions, saying the U.N.'s most powerful body should declare the extremist group a terrorist organization and pressure it to immediately release the hostages.

In a statement that sur-

prised some diplomats, Katz noted that Monday was the start of the Muslim holy month of Ramadan and said: "Let me take this opportunity to bless our Muslim brothers: Ramadan Kareem." That means have a blessed or generous Ramadan.

"Hamas is not speaking on behalf of the Muslim world," Katz said, "and we are asking you to condemn the sexual violence crimes that these barbarians committed in the name of the Muslim religion."

Riyad Mansour, the Palestinian U.N. ambassador, told the council that Muslims around the world are celebrating Ramadan but "in Gaza, death and suffering can be found everywhere.

Food and hope can be found nowhere."

He told the council that Israel's Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu doesn't want a cease-fire because his "political survival requires for the onslaught to continue."

Israel's objective, Mansour said, "remains the forcible displacement of our people by making Gaza unlivable." □

Associated Press

## Ukraine needs more than a billion dollars to rebuild its scientific infrastructure, U.N. agency says

PARIS (AP) — Ukraine will need more than a billion



Galyna Tolstolutska, head of the department of radiation damage and radiation materials science of the National Scientific Center "Kharkov Institute of Physics and Technology" stands at her department which was heavily damaged after a Russian attack in Kharkiv, Ukraine, Thursday, May 18, 2023.

Associated Press

dollars to rebuild scientific infrastructure that was damaged or destroyed during two years of Russia's war on its neighbor, the United Nations' cultural and scientific agency said on Monday.

More than 1,443 scientific facilities, many attached to the country's universities, have been damaged or destroyed along with 750 pieces of vital technical equipment, most of which is beyond repair, UNESCO said in a report released Monday.

The war, now in its third year, has also depleted the science sector of funds and dispersed Ukraine's scientists, displacing many within

the country and sending others into exile.

The situation around the Institute for Safety Problems of Nuclear Power Plants, near the Russia-occupied Zaporizhzhia Nuclear Power Plant in Ukraine's southeast, is of particular concern, the report said. The institute's essential equipment for monitoring the nuclear industry has been stolen or destroyed, representing a safety threat in the region and beyond, the report said.

Before the war, Ukraine was internationally known for significant contributions in computer science, nuclear physics and astronomy, among other areas.

"We must protect and support (scientific) research in Ukraine," UNESCO Director-General Audrey Azoulay said. She added: "Scientists, engineers and other experts will be essential to the country's recovery."

A total of 1,443 buildings belonging to 177 scientific institutions have been damaged or destroyed in the war.

Restoring these facilities will cost more than \$ 1.21 billion including \$980.5 million for universities that have sustained the brunt of damage, the report said.

The total cost to restore essential research equipment is estimated at \$45.9 million. □

# Philippines says U.S. will address concerns over garment exports held up on suspicion of forced labor

By **JIM GOMEZ**  
Associated Press

**MANILA, Philippines (AP)** —

The U.S. commerce secretary has committed to address concerns by the Philippines after American authorities held up shipments of garments on suspicion that cotton was produced by forced labor in China's Xinjiang region, Philippine officials said Tuesday.

Philippine Trade Secretary Alfredo Pascual raised the issue in a meeting Monday with U.S. Commerce Secretary Gina Raimondo, who was leading a U.S. business delegation in Manila to further expand trade and investment in America's oldest treaty ally in Asia.

"Secretary Raimondo has committed to assist us on this issue," Philippine Trade Undersecretary Ceferino Rodolfo told The Associated Press, without elaborating. "We are working collaboratively with the U.S. side."

U.S. officials did not comment immediately.

The Philippine Trade Department said the issue in-



**U.S. Commerce Secretary Gina Raimondo speaks to U.S. and Philippine business groups at Makati city, Philippines on Tuesday March 12, 2024.**

Associated Press

involved "detained apparel exports" in the U.S. but did not elaborate.

A Philippine trade official told the AP that several shipments of apparel to the U.S. by just one Philippines-based company since November had not been re-

leased by the U.S. Customs and Border Protection due to suspicion cotton produced by Xinjiang's predominantly Muslim Uyghurs were used in the exported apparels.

The official spoke on condition of anonymity because

of a lack of authority to discuss the matter publicly. The Philippines is concerned such issues could tarnish the image of its apparel exports to the U.S., one of Manila's largest export markets.

In 2021, President Joe Biden

signed a bill into law to block imports from Xinjiang and other areas in China unless businesses can prove the items were made without forced labor. The law requires U.S. government agencies to expand their monitoring of the use of forced labor by China's ethnic minorities.

The U.S. cites raw cotton, gloves, tomato products, silicon and viscose, fishing gear and components in solar energy as among goods alleged to have been produced using forced labor in Xinjiang, a resource-rich mining region that is important for agricultural production and has a booming industrial sector.

The 2021 law was among attempts by the U.S. to get tough with China over its alleged systemic and widespread abuse of ethnic and religious minorities in its western region, especially the Uyghurs.

China has denied any abuses and says the steps it has taken are necessary to combat terrorism and a separatist movement. □

# Kenya's government puts deployment of police to Haiti on hold after chaos grips the Caribbean nation

By **TOM ODULA**  
Associated Press

**NAIROBI, Kenya (AP)** — Kenya is halting plans to deploy at least 1,000 police officers to Haiti following the unprecedented violence that erupted in the Caribbean nation and the announcement by its Prime Minister Ariel Henry that he would resign once a presidential council is created, a Kenyan official said Tuesday.

Kenya had agreed last October to lead a U.N.-authorized international police force to Haiti, but the country's top court in January ruled this was unconstitutional, in part because of a lack of reciprocal agreements on such deployments between the two countries.

Kenya's President William Ruto said that he and Henry had witnessed the signing of the reciprocal agreements between Kenya and Haiti on March 1, clearing the path for the deploy-

ment. Under the plan, the U.N.-backed multi-national police led by Kenyan officers was to help quell gang violence that has long plagued Haiti. But violence escalated sharply since

Feb. 29, with gunmen burning police stations, closing the main international airports and raiding the country's two biggest prisons, releasing more than 4,000 inmates.

Scores have been killed, and more than 15,000 are homeless after fleeing neighborhoods raided by gangs. Food and water are dwindling and the main port in the capital of Port-au-Prince remains closed, stranding dozens of containers with critical supplies. After returning from a trip to Kenya where he had gone to salvage plans for the African country's deployment, Henry has been locked out of his own country and has remained in Puerto Rico since last week.

"It is true the planned de-

ployment of police officers has been put on hold," Kenya's Foreign Affairs Principal Secretary Koriri Sing'oei said Tuesday.

"There has been a fundamental change in circumstances in Haiti as a result of the complete breakdown of law and order," Sing'oei added.

Henry's announcement Tuesday that he would resign once a transitional presidential council is created indicated he was bowing to international pressure to make way for new leadership in the country overwhelmed by violent gangs. Henry spoke after Caribbean leaders and U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken met in Jamaica to discuss a solution to Haiti's spiraling crisis. □



**Kenya police patrol the streets of Nairobi, Kenya Tuesday, March 12, 2024.**

Associated Press

# Aruba to me

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its affiliated companies to use said materials, as well as names, likeness, etc. for promotional purposes without compensation. Last but not least: check out our website, Instagram and Facebook page! Thank you for supporting our free newspaper, we strive to make you a happy reader every day again. For today we received a lovely message from our awesome visitor Lisa Kress from Bedford, NH, USA.

She wrote to us saying: "Aruba to me is an annual 'family reunion' of the friendships we have made over the years with people from all over the world since



becoming timeshare owners at Casa del Mar over 30 years ago. Each year, the group evolves and grows at our home away from home. And each of the 3-plus weeks we are here is filled with different friends as vacations begin and end. Di Berman (Cape

Cod, MA) the organizer of our annual week 9 beach friends photo, lovingly knitted 22 Aruba flag scarves at home and brought them to Aruba for us to wear for this year's photo. It turned out that there were not enough scarves because almost everyone Di invited

to share in this happy occasion actually showed up!"

Photograph by Scott Miner (Connecticut).

Thank you for sending us this wonderful message sharing what Aruba means to you with us and our readers! □

# Blackstone Beach

**(Oranjestad)—Named after its most recognizable feature, the Blackstone Beach almost represents the opposite of the typical Aruban beaches. For one, it has black sand and is covered in black smooth stones. Secondly, it lies on the northern side of the island, away from the white sandy beaches of in the southern region. So, if you feel up for something different—or if it's opposite day, visit the Blackstone Beach.**

Blackstone Beach shows the more natural side of Aruba: the stones that cover the beaches and the shape of it has been crafted for thousand years via volcanic eruptions, coral reef movements and wave activity of the rural northern part of the island.

Located further east to the Natural Bridge and Andicuri Beach, the Blackstone Beach is relatively easy to access. Once you get passed the Ayo Rock Formation, take the Andicuri road leading up to Andicuri Beach. There, you can park your car and take a 1km hike towards Blackstone Beach.

This beach forms part of the Arikok National Park and is therefore a site that is preserved. This is why it is also relatively untouched by commercial influences. Despite being called a beach, do note that it is not advised to swim in the water, as the current is very strong and can easily stray you further in the wild ocean. However, you can still enjoy a spectacular view of the stones and the northern ocean that stretches out in front of the beach and take a picture with your friends or family! □



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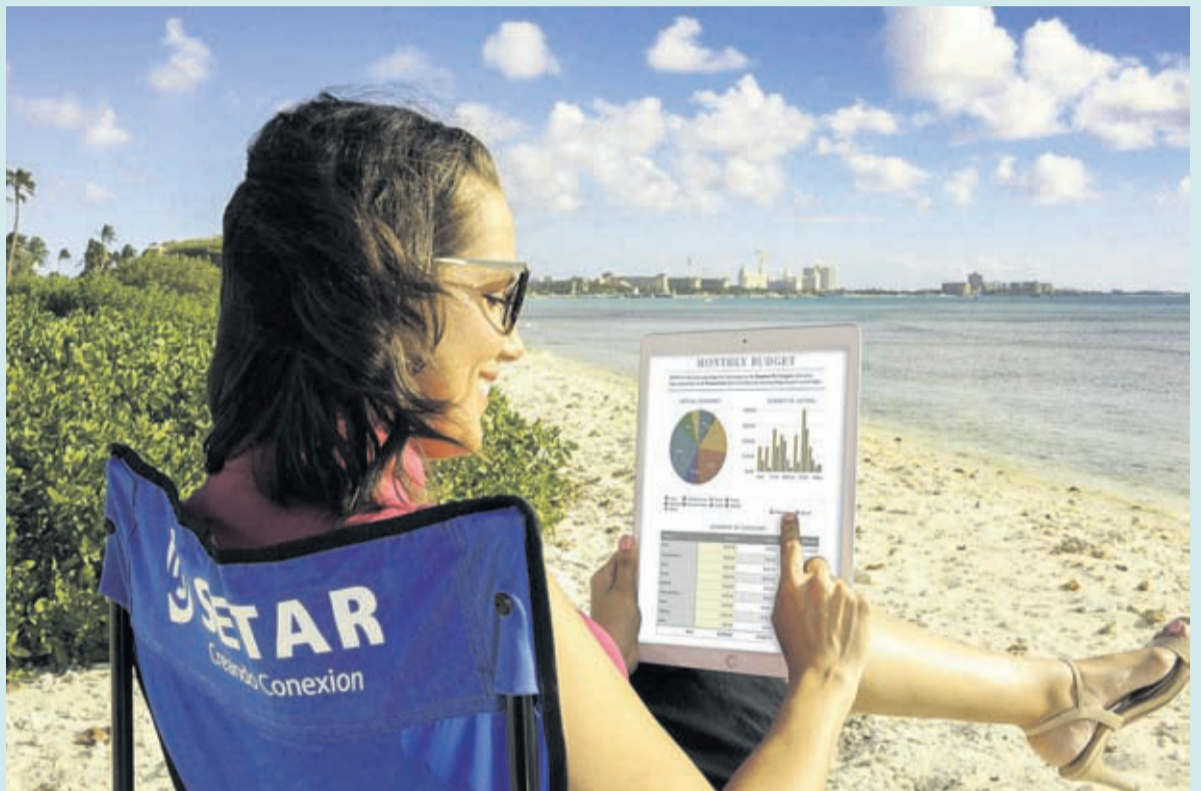
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## Aruba Tourism Authority honors loyal visitors at Manchebo Beach Resort & spa!



The Aruba Tourism Authority recently had the great pleasure of recognizing distinguished Visitors of Aruba. These Ambassadors were respectively honored with a certificate acknowledging their years of visits, loyalty, and love for the island of Aruba.

The honor certification is presented on behalf of the Minister of Tourism as a token of appreciation and to say "Masha Danki" to guests who have visited Aruba 10, 20, or 35 years or more consecutively.

The three honoring levels are as follows:

- Distinguished Visitor (10>years consecutively visiting Aruba)
- Goodwill Ambassador (20>years consecutively visiting Aruba)
- Emerald Ambassador (35>years consecutively visiting Aruba)

The honorees were:

Distinguished Visitors  
Mr. Ron & Dianne Marsan from Massachusetts, United States.

Mr. Jorgino Willems representing the Aruba Tourism Authority, and staff members of Manchebo Beach Resort & Spa bestowed the honor certification to the honorees, presented

them with gifts, and thanked them for choosing Aruba as their favorite vacation destination, as their home away from home.

Top reasons for returning to Aruba, provided by the honorees were:

- Aruba is a safe destination to vacation.
- Aruba's beaches.
- Aruba's friendly people.
- Aruba is easy to travel to.
- Aruba's great restaurant options.

On behalf of the Aruba Tourism Authority, we would like to express our sincere gratitude and appreciation to the honoree for his continued visits to the "One Happy Island". ☐

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## Aruba Tourism Authority honors loyal visitors at Hilton Aruba Caribbean Resort and Casino!

The Aruba Tourism Authority recently had the great pleasure of recognizing distinguished Visitors of Aruba. These Ambassadors were respectively honored with a certificate acknowledging their years of visits, loyalty, and love for the island of Aruba.

The honor certification is presented on behalf of the Minister of Tourism as a token of appreciation and to say "Masha Danki" to guests who have visited Aruba 10, 20, or 35 years or more consecutively.

The three honoring levels are as follows:

Distinguished Visitor (10>years consecutively visiting Aruba)

Goodwill Ambassador (20>years consecutively visiting Aruba)

Emerald Ambassador (35>years consecutively

visiting Aruba)

The honorees were:

Distinguished Visitors

Mr. Richard Cordes & Ms. Robin Juckem from Pennsylvania, United States.

Mr. Jorgino Willems representing the Aruba Tourism Authority, and staff members of Hilton Aruba Caribbean Resort and Casino bestowed the honor certification to the honorees, presented them with gifts, and thanked them for choosing Aruba as their favorite vacation destination, as their home away from home.

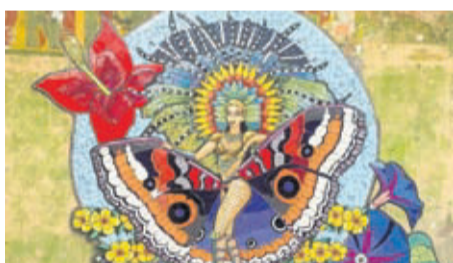
Top reasons for returning to Aruba, provided by the honorees were:

- Aruba's great weather.
- Aruba's wonderful food options.



- Aruba's activities options (horseback riding, snorkeling and golfing)
- Aruba is easy to travel to.
- "Hiltons staff makes our stays memorable"

On behalf of the Aruba Tourism Authority, we would like to express our sincere gratitude and appreciation to the honoree for his continued visits to the "One Happy Island". □



**SAN NICOLAS—** At Just 11 miles southeast from Oranjestad you will enter the city San Nicolas, also known as Sunrise City or Chocolate City. A city that is rich in authentic culture and island charm. San Nicolas is Aruba's second largest city and was once a bustling company town dominated by the oil industry since the early 1930's.

Over the course of four decades, its demographics had changed immensely due to a stream of Afro-Caribbean and South American workers who came to fill the jobs in the oil refinery between the 1920's until the 1960's. To this day traces of the multicultural influences in culinary offerings and customs, housing and population are clearly visible in San Nicolas - more than anywhere else on the island.

## Exploring the Mainstreet of San Nicolas

### Flow of history

if you are looking for history San Nicolas has it. Here you will find three amazing museums, The Museum of Industry, the Community Museum and the Carnival Euphoria, all within walking distance from one another.

The Museum of Industry is situated in the Water Tower in San Nicolas and narrates Aruba's industrial history which began in the 19th century. Here you will learn about gold, aloe, phosphate, oil and the tourism industries which made San Nicolas once a bustling business center. Experience the touching stories of those who were part of this history.

Nicolaas Store built in 1940 and renovated in 2014 is the home of the Community Museum. The collection is remarkable and spans millennia. Ancient fossils stand next to tableaus of an authentically recreated colonial kitchen and bedroom and 19th-century barbershop, just to name a few of the

items of old-time Aruba that has been preserved. A collection of artifacts and other objects of artistic, cultural, historical, or scientific importance can be found here for the purpose of education or enjoyment.

Carnival Euphoria is showcasing Aruba's Carnival. See how are Carnival has developed over the past 65 years.

### The new San Nicolas

In the shadow of the refinery, an art capital is quietly beginning to grow. This is the new San Nicolas, a place that is starting to become a magnet for all that is young, cool and hip in Aruba. Indeed, San Nicolas has all of the ingredients of an emerging cultural hub — varied history, interesting architecture, and, perhaps most importantly, an urban layout that makes it walkable. As you walk around, the streets are silent but the walls are loud, filled with bright, colorful murals painted by a collection of artists from around the world.

Thanks to the efforts of various art organizations in Aruba, such as Art Rules Aruba and Aruba Art Fair, San Nicolas has had quite the aesthetic makeover with regards to vibrant street art. Each year more and more stunning murals are replacing broken down buildings with colorful art pieces that keep brightening up SunriseCity.

### Must See, Do, Buy & Eat

A little bit of everything can be found in the main street. Stores selling shoes, clothing, jewelry you name it. Arts & crafts by Cosecha store & Creative Center, a design store in which you can immerse yourself in discovering genuine and locally made arts and crafts which reflect the diversification of the Aruban craft heritage and the artistic supply of artisans. Don't miss out on trying the exquisite food offered by the cafes and restaurants or just enjoy a peaceful walk admiring the murals, mosaic benches and all the history San Nicolas has to offer. □



Article by Etnia Nativa  
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## In loving memory of Joopi, first Aruban Bishop

Each week, Island Insight shares with you a story of Aruba through the eyes of Etnia Nativa, where we welcome our guests to an island experience far beyond their usual expectations. We link you with the mystical aspects of the island, its native culture, and its traditional colonial heritage.

In this episode, we open our cabinet of curiosities to share the story of the first priest of Aruba, who was born at the end of the 18th century into one of the most prominent Protestant families in Oranjestad; however, he was consecrated by the Roman Catholic Apostolic Church as the first Bishop of the Netherlands Antilles. His name was Jacob Lewis Thielen van der Veen Zeppenfeldt.

The Zeppenfeldt family came originally from Germany, from the city of Olpe in the Sauerland area, and later lived in Hildesheim. In the middle Ages, the Zeppenfeldt family was most likely prosperous over time; they expanded their business in several European countries, also settling in the Netherlands, and from there, through the Dutch West India Company, or WIC, they immigrated to the Netherlands Antilles. This very peculiar story begins when a family member's van der Veen Zeppenfeldt married into the Thielen family of Oranjestad. On October 11, 1891, Jacob Lewis Thielen van der Veen Zeppenfeldt was born. He was the second child of Lodewick van der

Veen Zeppenfeldt and Constanca Maria Thielen, who was one of the many daughters of Jacob Thielen III, at that time Governor of Aruba. Jacob Lewis Thielen, a.k.a. Joopi, was a very studious child who actively believed in the value of human life, practicing benevolent treatment, and assisting those who were suffering.

From an early age, he grew up seeing and experiencing the marked division that existed between the white Protestants established in Oranjestad and the indigenous Catholic natives scattered throughout the interior of the island.

Joopi's interest went far beyond the color of people's skin; for him, they were all equal souls that would transcend in the same way to a spiritual life. He enjoyed supporting those who had the least, those who were most helpless, and those who were going through difficult situations, and for them, he always had a word of comfort. He wasn't distinguishing if the people in need were Catholics, Prot-

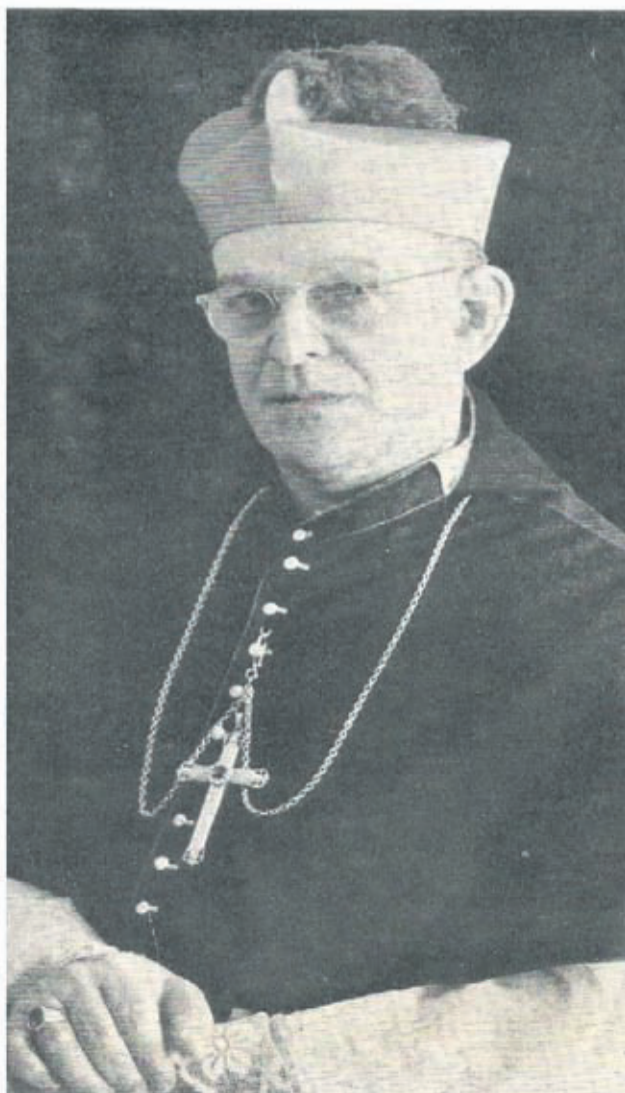
## Episode CCXLVIII - 248

estants, or Jews, who at that time did not have a spiritual leader, a Dominee, or a Rabbi. He was always attentive to the needs of all people.

He was intensely curious about the world around him and about humanity; this motivated him to begin his ecclesiastical studies, to his family's surprise, through the Roman Catholic Apostolic faith, first converting to Catholicism and later standing out in the role of a Netherlands Antillean's Cleric, becoming the first Aruban priest and Bishop of the six Dutch Caribbean Islands. He entered the Dominican Order, and his priestly ordination took place on August 15, 1918. When Jacob Lewis Thielen Zeppenfeldt was ordained as a priest, many of his family members disapproved, and a division broke into Zeppenfeldt-Thielen's family since some family members even converted to the Roman Catholic Apostolic faith.

On November 11, 1948, Jacob Lewis Thielen Van der Veen Zeppenfeldt was appointed vicar apostolic of Curaçao and titular Bishop of Acholla. His episcopal consecration took place on December 30, 1948. In 1949, he was knighted in the Order of the Dutch Lion. He founded the parishes of Paradera and Brazil in Aruba and consecrated the churches there. He also had many demands for the Alto Vista chapel to be a place of devotion, a story that we will share in future episodes.

Van der Veen Zeppenfeldt was vicar for eight years. He retired on December 9, 1956; he died in Curacao on July 4, 1957. R.I.P., beloved Joopi. ☐



If knowing more about Aruba is on your itinerary, Etnia Nativa is your only choice—a unique native gem! Let Anthony, our acclaimed cultural columnist, guide and lecture you regarding the most interesting and revealing stories regarding Aruba's uncovering knowledge acquired through generations of native ethnic presence, an beyond beaches learning adventure. Visit his magnificent dwelling that integrates reused materials with nature, bursting with culture and island heritage! WhatsApp +297 592 2702 etnianativa03@gmail.com

# Aruba's cultural and literary development: Then and now



(Oranjestad)—The Aruban culture has seen many substantial developments over the course of a century. With the introduction of the Lago Refinery at the turn of the 20th century, followed by the breakout of the Second World War and the general incentive for political independence during the mid-century, a cultural identity on the island began to take form and have since developed through international and local influences.

In the pre-industrial era of the 19th century, much could not be said about a cultural identity on the island. Still being a part of a Dutch colonial territory at the time, as well as not having political or economic autonomy (Curacao was the center of commerce, cultural life, and political management of the Netherland Antilles at the time), the small population of Aruba consisted mostly of farmers and fishermen, tending to their crops and their cattle, or going out to fish to provide for their family. As Quito Nicolaas states in his article *Historia di Literatura Arubiano: E Bida Cultural* (Literary History of Aruba: Cultural Life), "during the pre-industrial period, there were no significant economic activity that could have created a cultural ambience, with only one way to generate profit at the time for the sub existence of Aruban families."

It wasn't until the introduction of the Lago Refinery in San Nicolas in 1928, that the island saw a small boom in cultural manifestations and entertainment, as farmers left the 'cunucu' (country) life to work in the refinery, which resulted in Aruba acquiring a different economic pillar. Before this, entertainment and cultural manifestations were mostly experienced by local parishes and the island's elite, who often partook in cultural and entertaining activities around the island, like going to the movie theater or coming together to share poetry on Sundays after church.

### Literary life

Throughout the 19th century and up until the



1940s, there were also not much trace of a cultural climate for the cultural-literary sector on the island. Primary education was introduced on the island in the mid-19th century, followed by secondary and higher education around the late 30's and 40's. It wasn't until the 1950s, with the introduction of the E.R.N.A agreement in 1951 and the signing of the Statute in 1954, which allowed more space for and control over the economic and cultural development of Aruba, that the literary life on the island began to grow substantially compared to decades before. This was in response to local institutions established in the 1940s for cultural and literary growth on the island, but that did not yet capture the attention of the general public. The 1950 brought with it a boom of literary production on the island, like those of V.S. Piternella, as well as migrant authors José Ramón Vicioso y Rings William Rufus, who have also contributed to the literary development on the island. The literary movement was further promoted by local broadcasters Voz di Aruba and Radio Kelboom, with their regular broadcast of literary works.

The 50s and 60s also saw the influence of international cultures, especially that of the United States. During this time, because of international influences as well as the continued prosperity of the oil refinery, cultural traditions in Aruba began to really take form and become widespread, as different worldly and local concepts were introduced in the Aruban society. With

the establishment of local television broadcast station Tele-Aruba in 1963, and with time and possibilities, local programs such as "Nos Tera" ("Our Land") started to pay more attention to the Aruban culture and worked to form a cultural consciousness within the community. The 1960s also saw the rise of local authors and artists, who were more comfortable in producing works in our native tongue, Papiamentu, but who also produced works in Spanish, English and Dutch. This new phenomenon was in response to the interaction between economic growth, individual prosperity, cultural life and literary expression.

### The 21st century

Nowadays, international influence on our culture is still prevalent, especially those from Latin America, the United States and The Netherlands. Nevertheless, there also exists a strong cultural identity and traditions that are exclusive to the Aruban culture, often manifesting during traditional celebrations, like Dia di San Juan/ Dera Gai (St. John's Day), Dia di Himno y Bandera (National Hymn and Flag Day), Camping during Easter and much more. With the surge of social media in the last decade, artistic voices, especially those of the younger generation, has become even more prevalent and easily accessible to the community of Aruba through online platforms such as Facebook, Instagram and TikTok. □

Source: *Historia di Literatura Arubiano: E Bida Cultural* by J.R. "Quito" Nicolaas



**CROSSWORD**

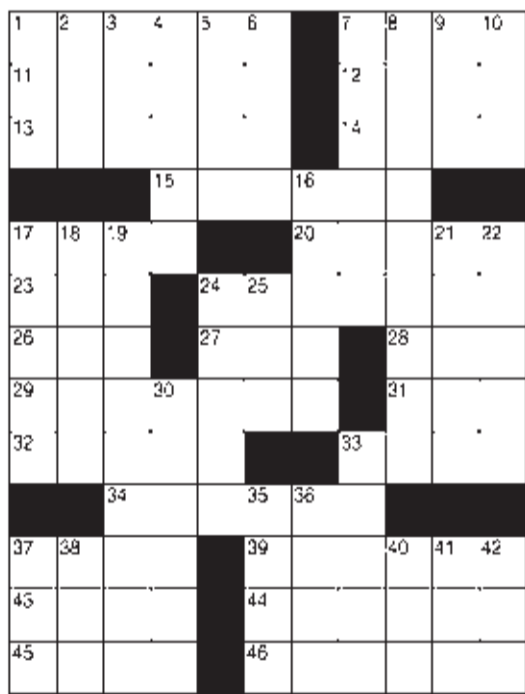
By THOMAS JOSEPH

- ACROSS**
- 1 Cleans
  - 7 Tuning knob
  - 11 Bee abode
  - 12 Obsessed with
  - 13 Church officer
  - 14 Three or four
  - 15 Houdini feat
  - 17 Placed down
  - 20 Coffee bar order
  - 23 Hold title to
  - 24 Catch off guard
  - 26 Rule in India
  - 27 Target
  - 28 Poorly
  - 29 Gets into something
  - 31 Engine need
  - 32 Splinter groups
  - 33 Travel stops
  - 34 Stressful
  - 37 Diva's piece
  - 39 Parking attendants
  - 43 Hen pen
  - 44 Makes amends
  - 45 Addition column
  - 46 Brain, slangily
- DOWN**
- 1 Used to be
  - 2 King Kong, for one
  - 3 Caret's key
  - 4 Despised
  - 5 Amorous archer
  - 6 Dubbing concern
  - 7 Nanny's nappy
  - 8 Disease
  - 9 Finished off
  - 10 De-pressed
  - 16 Second U.S. president
  - 17 Leapers in a Christmas song
  - 18 In the know
  - 19 Disease treatment, sometimes
  - 21 Bold poker bet
  - 22 Chops down
  - 24 Fresh
  - 25 Even score
  - 30 Bra parts
  - 33 Snow house
  - 35 Infamous czar
  - 36 Brussels-based org.
  - 37 Join a cast
  - 38 Fish eggs
  - 40 Cease
  - 41 — Aviv
  - 42 Direction opposite NNW



**Yesterday's answer**

- 18 In the know
- 19 Disease treatment, sometimes
- 21 Bold poker bet
- 22 Chops down
- 24 Fresh
- 25 Even score
- 30 Bra parts
- 33 Snow house
- 35 Infamous czar
- 36 Brussels-based org.
- 37 Join a cast
- 38 Fish eggs
- 40 Cease
- 41 — Aviv
- 42 Direction opposite NNW



AXYDI.BAAXR  
is LONGFELLOW

One letter stands for another. In this sample, A is used for the three L's, X for the two O's, etc. Single letters, apostrophes, the length and formation of the words are all hints. Each day the code letters are different.

3-13

**CRYPTOQUOTE**

L H M G Z R M G O Y Y

X A G X Z D Z I I M X M G E O G

Z X S R H Z X A X Q J Y C G E X M .

— X . L . U C Z M G X Z

**Yesterday's Cryptoquote:** LIFE BECOMES EASIER WHEN YOU LEARN TO ACCEPT AN APOLOGY YOU NEVER GOT. — ROBERT BRAULT

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Caribbean Speed Printers N.V.  
Aruba Bank N.V. Acc. #332668  
Caribbean Mercantile Bank N.V.  
Acc. #23951903  
RBC Royal Bank Acc. #1330772

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# Millennial Money: The evolution of retirement and what it might mean for you

By **KATE ASHFORD** of **Nerd-Wallet**

Now that retirement spans more years than ever, you might need to rethink how you're envisioning that stage of your life. Although Americans are retiring a little later than they did 30 years ago, they're also living longer. Retirement isn't a blip on the life radar—it's a significant chunk of time. While your parents may have retired and never worked another day in their lives, you may find that part-time work when you get older fulfills your mental needs and helps your retirement savings last. You may have to be more aggressive with your investments than you expected. And staying healthy is crucial.

"The questions I'm being asked are different, and the conversations clients are bringing to me are different," says John McGlothlin III, a certified financial planner in Austin, Texas. Here are the ways retirement might be shaping up for you.

## **YOU'LL KEEP MORE MONEY IN STOCKS**

People used to enter retirement with a conservative-leaning portfolio that held a solid chunk in bonds and cash alternatives. Although



U.S. \$100 bills are seen, Thursday, July 14, 2022, in Marple Township, Pa.

Associated Press

advisers aren't suggesting clients throw caution to the wind, they're tweaking the investing plan at this life stage.

"We may just stay a little more aggressive, because the day you retire, you don't need all this money," says Jonathan Swanburg, a CFP in Houston. "Some of this money is for 30 years from now, some of it is for your kids and grandkids because you're never going to touch it."

McGlothlin encourages his

clients to exit target date funds at retirement because he thinks they get too conservative. "The moment you hit that retirement date, they all of a sudden go to 50% bonds, and within a few years you're at 60% and 70% bonds," he says. "While bond yields are much better than they were a few years ago, I don't necessarily think I can get clients 20 to 30 years of sustainable withdrawals if I'm that bond heavy."

## **YOU MAY CHOOSE TO KEEP**

## **WORKING**

The number of adults age 65 and older who are working is almost twice the number who were working 35 years ago, according to a 2023 Pew Research report. Consulting or part-time work in retirement allows you to withdraw less from your savings and potentially delay taking Social Security, and your investments have more time to grow.

"It gives us flexibility in our asset spend-down picture," says Catherine Valega, a

CFP in Winchester, Massachusetts. "The thought of moving to no more income coming in that's really stress provoking."

Valega also encourages clients to pursue work and other activities so they don't go stir-crazy. "You're going to have 10 hours in the day that you didn't have before," she says. "You can exercise, and that's great and you should, but beyond that you need some amount of mental stimulation."

## **YOU MAY WANT TO SAVE FOR IN-HOME CARE**

Most adults age 55 and older want to age in place, according to a 2023 survey from the McKinsey Health Institute. Eighty percent wish to live in their own home, and 71% of older adults who aren't living in their own home wish they could.

With home health aides having a national median cost of \$27 an hour, according to Genworth's 2021 Cost of Care data, planning for in-home care may require working longer to build the nest egg to pay for it, or even relocating to a city where home services are cheaper. Renovations to make a home more accessible or single-story livable are also helpful. □

# The IRS launches Direct File, a pilot program for free online tax filing available in 12 states

By **ADRIANA MORGA** and **FATIMA HUSSEIN**

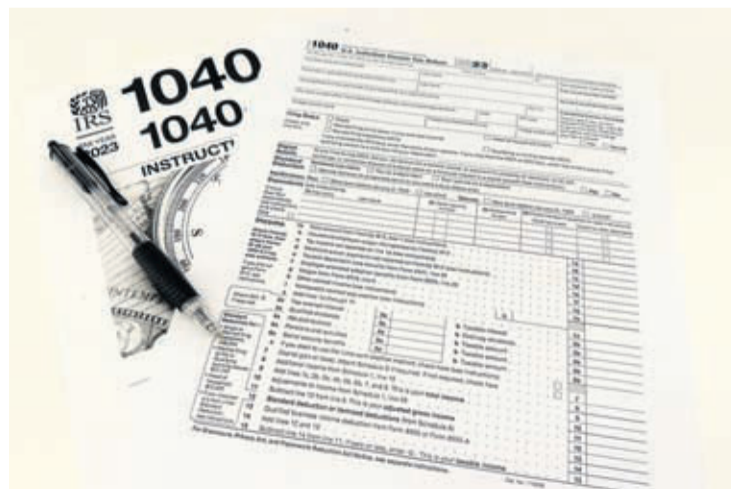
Associated Press

**NEW YORK (AP)** — After weeks of testing, an electronic system for filing returns directly to the IRS is now available for taxpayers from 12 selected states. The new system, called Direct File, is a free online tool. Taxpayers in the selected states who have very simple W-2s and claim a standard deduction may be eligible to use it this tax season to file their federal income taxes. The program will also offer a Spanish version, which will be available starting at 1 p.m. Eastern

Time on Tuesday.

The Treasury Department

estimates that one-third of all federal income tax



An Internal Revenue Service 2023 1040 tax form and instructions are shown on Jan. 26, 2024 in New York.

Associated Press

returns filed could be prepared using Direct File and that 19 million taxpayers may be eligible to use the tool this tax season.

"Direct File will offer millions of Americans a free and simple way to file their taxes, with no expensive and unnecessary filing fees and no upselling, putting hundreds of dollars back in the pocket of working families each year, consistent with President Biden's pledge to lower costs," said National Economic Advisor Lael Brainard.

Certain taxpayers in Florida, New Hampshire, Nevada, South Dakota, Ten-

nessee, Texas, Washington, Wyoming, Arizona, Massachusetts, California and New York can participate. Direct File can only be used to file federal income taxes, taxpayers from states that require filing state taxes will need to do so separately. The Direct File pilot is part of the agency's effort to build out a new government service that could replace some taxpayers' use of commercial tax preparation software, such as TurboTax.

It's meant to be simple and provides a step-by-step walkthrough of easy-to-answer questions. □



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## Luca Nardi stuns boyhood idol and top-ranked Novak Djokovic with a 6-4, 3-6, 6-3 win at Indian Wells

**INDIAN WELLS, Calif. (AP)** — Luca Nardi used a combination of poise and power to stun his boyhood idol and top-seeded Novak Djokovic with a 6-4, 3-6, 6-3 win on Monday night in the third round of the BNP Paribas Open.

Nardi, who's ranked No. 123, closed out his huge upset over the No. 1 player in the rankings with an ace. The 20-year-old from Italy dropped his racket and brought his hands to his face almost in disbelief before greeting Djokovic at the net.

"This is a miracle," Nardi said in an interview after the match on the Tennis Channel. "I'm a 20-year-old guy, 100 in the world, and beating Novak. So, crazy. Crazy."

Setting the tone early with his hard-hitting shots, Nardi frustrated Djokovic all evening. There was a moment when Nardi was surprised by an "in" call and casually hit the ball back over the net. It resulted in a win-



**Luca Nardi, of Italy, celebrates after upsetting Novak Djokovic, of Serbia, at the BNP Paribas Open tennis tournament Monday, March 11, 2024, in Indian Wells, Calif. Nardi won 6-4, 3-6, 6-3.**

Associated Press

ner and led to Djokovic complaining to the official about a potential hindrance.

To think, Nardi was nearly on his way home. He got into the field as a "lucky

loser," which is a player who stumbled on the final hurdle in qualifying but made it into the main draw as a replacement for an injured player who pulled out before the first round.

In Nardi's case, he stepped in for No. 30 Tomas Martin Etcheverry and received a bye through the opening round.

He went on to become the lowest-ranked player to

beat Djokovic in a Grand Slam or ATP Masters 1000 level event, surpassing No. 122 Kevin Anderson in 2008 in Miami.

Using a combination of aggressiveness and finesse, Nardi had Djokovic, the 24-time Grand Slam singles champion from Serbia he grew up watching, smiling and shaking his head at times in a mixture of surprise and shock.

Nardi was far from intimidated, either, answering Djokovic's well-placed shots with well-placed returns of his own.

"Before this night, no one knew me," said Nardi, who will face American Tommy Paul in the round of 16. "I hope now the crowd enjoyed the game. I'm super happy with this one."

Djokovic certainly didn't know that much about Nardi, only what he gleaned watching him play. He knew Nardi had a strong baseline game, especially with the forehand, and moved well. □

## Darryl Strawberry resting comfortably after heart attack, according to New York Mets

**LAKE ST. LOUIS, Mo. (AP)** — Former New York Mets and Yankees star Darryl Strawberry is recovering from a heart attack and is at SSM Health St. Joseph Hospital. Mets spokesman Jay Horwitz said Tuesday that Strawberry was stricken Monday, a day before the eight-time All-Star's 62nd birthday.

Strawberry posted a photo of himself at the hospital on Instagram and wrote: "I am so happy and honored to report that all is well."

"So thankful for the medi-

cal team and staff at St. Joseph West in Lake St. Louis for responding so quickly and bringing me through a stent-procedure that has brought my heart to total restoration!!!" Strawberry added.

Strawberry, who lives in O'Fallon, Missouri, is resting comfortably, Horwitz said.

The Mets will retire Strawberry's No. 18 on June 1, after retiring Dwight Gooden's No. 16 on April 14. The pair led the team to the 1986 World Series title. "We are looking forward to Straw's

speedy recovery and welcoming him for his number retirement ceremony on June 1," Mets owner Steven Cohen and wife Alex said in a statement. Strawberry was a seven-time All-Star during his time with the Mets from 1983-90, winning NL Rookie of the Year in 1983. He hit .259 with 335 homers, 1,000 RBIs and 221 stolen bases in 17 seasons that also included time with the Los Angeles Dodgers (1991-93), San Francisco Giants (1994) and New York Yankees (1995-99). □



**Former New York Mets baseball player Darryl Strawberry poses at Citi Field in New York Aug. 1, 2010.**

Associated Press

## Ravens agree to 2-year deal with free agent RB Derrick Henry, AP source says

By **NOAH TRISTER**  
AP Sports Writer

The Baltimore Ravens agreed to a two-year contract with free agent running back Derrick Henry on Tuesday, according to a person with knowledge of the deal.

The person spoke to The Associated Press on condition of anonymity because the move can't become official until the new league year begins Wednesday. The deal is worth up to \$20 million and includes \$9 million guaranteed.

The two-time NFL rushing champ joins a Baltimore team that annually produces one of the league's leading ground games. The running back room was a major offseason concern for the Ravens, because Gus Edwards and J.K. Dobbins became free agents. Edwards has agreed to a deal with the Los Angeles Chargers.

Henry's eight-year NFL career all with the Tennessee



**Tennessee Titans running back Derrick Henry stands for the national anthem before an NFL football game against the Jacksonville Jaguars, Sunday, Jan. 7, 2024, in Nashville, Tenn.**  
Associated Press

Titans to this point includes a 2020 season when he rushed for 2,027 yards, becoming the eighth player to surpass 2,000.

Henry turned 30 in January. The four-time Pro Bowler

led the NFL in 2023 with 280 rushing attempts and ranked second to Christian McCaffrey with 1,167 yards rushing. His 12 rushing TDs were fourth in the AFC, one behind Edwards. Henry also

had the first season of his career without a fumble. Henry leaves Tennessee ranked second in franchise history with 9,502 rushing yards, trailing only Eddie George (10,009).

The 45th pick overall in 2016 leads the NFL with 9,502 yards rushing and 90 rushing TDs in that span. The 6-foot-3, 247-pound Henry has finished in the NFL's top 10 in rushing each of the six past seasons.

Henry also has four career TD passes, which trails only Hall of Famer LaDainian Tomlinson (seven) among running backs since 2000.

The Ravens finished with the NFL's best regular-season record in 2023 before losing to Kansas City in the AFC championship game. Now they add another proven offensive playmaker to work alongside quarterback Lamar Jackson, who is coming off his second MVP season.

Baltimore was also able to reach a long-term deal with defensive tackle Justin Madubuike after putting the franchise tag on him, but the Ravens could end up losing several other key players to free agency. □

## NAACP urges student-athletes to reconsider Florida colleges after state eliminates DEI programs

By **MARK LONG**  
AP Sports Writer

**GAINESVILLE, Fla. (AP)** — Black student-athletes should reconsider attending public colleges and universities in Florida, the NAACP said in a letter to NCAA President Charlie Baker on Monday.

The letter was in response to the University of Florida and other state schools that have eliminated their diversity, equity and inclusion programs. It was also addressed to current and prospective student-athletes.



**Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis answers questions from the media, March 7, 2023, at the state Capitol in Tallahassee, Fla.**

Associated Press

"This is not about politics," the letter read. "It's about the protection of our community, the progression of our culture, and most of all, it's about your education and your future."

The letter was signed by NAACP National Board of Directors Chairman Leon W. Russell and NAACP President and CEO Derrick Johnson.

Last year, Republican Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis signed a bill prohibiting the use of state funds for any DEI programs. The University of Florida responded in

March by closing the Office of the Chief Diversity Officer, eliminating 13 full-time DEI positions and 15 administrative appointments, and ending DEI-focused contracts with outside vendors. Other state schools like North Florida and Florida International also have shut down DEI programs.

"While it is our duty to spread awareness and encourage action around these egregious assaults, we also recognize that protest can come at a price," the letter read. □